

CLAIMS

1. A method of distributing files between computing devices (10-22) of at least one group of computing devices including the step of performing a file reconciliation routine at periodic intervals automatically upon the networking of at least two of said computing devices.
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2. A method according to claim 1, including the step of controlling at least one of said computing devices (10-22) to transmit file reconciliation data periodically irrespective of its or their connectivity to other computing devices.
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3. A method according to claim 1 or 2, including the step of providing in said computing devices (10-22) at least one shared files directory into which shared files are automatically stored.
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4. A method according to claim 3, wherein the at least one shared files directory is directly accessible by software applications stored in the computing devices (10-22).
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5. A method according to any preceding claim, including the step distributing all shared files amongst all computers networked together.
6. A method according to claim 1, wherein all distributed files can be read from and written to in any of said computing devices (10-22).
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7. A method according to any preceding claim, including the steps of issuing file data to unspecified computers (10-22) within the group and receiving file data from unspecified computers (10-22) within the group.

8. A method of distributing files between computing devices (10-22) of at least one group of computing devices including the steps of issuing file data to unspecified computers (10-22) within the group and receiving file data from unspecified computers within the group.
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9. A method according to claim 8, including the step of accepting a computer (10-22) as a computer of said at least one group on the basis of the provision of group identification data specific to the group or specific to the device.
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10. A method according to any preceding claim, including the step of transmitting a journal of file history for each shared file from one computer into the network.
11. A method according to claim 10, including the step of a computing device
- 15 requesting only file versions not stored therein.
12. A method according to claim 10 or 11, wherein a file journal includes a code indicative of the contents of each file version in the journal.
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13. A method according to any preceding claim, including the step of dividing files into a plurality of portions for data transfer.
14. A method according to claim 13, wherein each file portion is provided with a contents code, the method including the step of transmitting only those file portions
- 25 which have been modified.
15. A method according to claim 13 or 14, including the step of providing in each computing device an accessible list of file portions stored therein and the step of determining whether a file portion required is stored therein from the list of accessible file
- 30 portions.

16. A method according to any preceding claim, including the step of storing file versions in a format in which they can be read from and written to.
- 5 17. A distributed file system for distributing files between computing devices (10-22) of at least one group of computing devices (10-22) including a file reconciliation unit operable to reconcile files between computing devices at periodic intervals automatically upon the networking of said computing devices.
- 10 18. A distributed file system for distributing files between computing devices (10-22) of at least one group of computing devices (10-22) including a transmission unit operable to issue file data to unspecified computers (10-22) within the group and a receiving unit operable to receive file data from unspecified computers within the group.
- 15 19. A computer network including a distributed file system according to claim 17 or 18 or operable by a method of distributing files according to any one of claims 1 to 16.
- 20 20. A software application for distributing files stored on or in a memory device, which software application is operable to perform the method according to any one of claims 1 to 16.